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UNCLAS KINGSTON 000129

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR THE SECRETARY AND WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY INVITED TO BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT BANQUET
IHO EDWARD SEAGA'S RETIREMENT FROM ACTIVE POLITICAL LIFE

1. (U) This is an action request. See Paragraph 5.

2. (U) On January 13, Embassy received by messenger a letter addressed to the Secretary from Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Senator Bruce Golding (full text at Para. 4). In it, Golding informs the Secretary that JLP parliamentarians are planning to hold a banquet in honor of former Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Edward Seaga's retirement from active political life. Seaga served 43 years in Parliament representing the same West Kingston constituency, including nine years as Prime Minister of Jamaica. Noting the Secretary's "close connections with Jamaica and the high

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esteem in which you are held by the Jamaican people," the letter invites the Secretary to be the keynote speaker at the banquet, which would be held in late February or early March, subject to the Secretary's availability. Prime Minister P.J. Patterson and Governor General Sir Howard Cooke will also be invited to pay tributes at the banquet.

3. (U) The letter originated with Golding's approach to the Ambassador at a dinner on January 5, when he first raised the idea and requested that she convey an invitation to the Secretary. Pol/Econ Chief subsequently contacted Golding to

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ask that the invitation be put into writing. Golding again emphasized the bipartisan nature of the planned banquet, which he said would be funded by corporate sponsors to ensure that it would be as apolitical as possible.

4. (U) Begin text:

The Honourable Colin L. Powell
Secretary of State

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US Department of State
2201 C. St. NW
Washington DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The Leader of the Opposition, the Most Honourable Edward Seaga, will retire from Parliament and active politics on January 19th. He will have completed 43 years of unbroken service to Parliament - the longest in our history - including his tenure as Prime Minister between 1980 and 1989.

The Opposition parliamentarians propose to hold a banquet to honour him for his long and distinguished service to the people of Jamaica. This will be a non-partisan event at which the Governor General and the Prime Minister will be invited to pay tributes.

Having regard to your close connections with Jamaica and the high esteem in which you are held by the Jamaican people, we and Mr. Seaga, himself, would be delighted if you would consent to be the keynote speaker at this gala event. We contemplate staging this banquet toward the end of February or in early March and would determine the date based on your availability. We would make all appropriate arrangements for your visit in consultation with the United States Embassy once we are advised of your availability.

We sincerely hope that you will find it possible to accept our invitation and we look forward to your early response.

Yours very sincerely,

/s/

Bruce Golding

5. (SBU) Comment and Action Request: The 74-year-old Seaga, who will soon take up a professorship at the University of the West Indies, is a much-respected (and at times controversial) Jamaican institution who has been a major force since the country gained its independence in 1962. For that reason, his departure from active political life is a momentous occasion. Golding is aware that the Secretary will

have returned to private life by the time the banquet takes place, and emphasized the organizers' willingness to accommodate his schedule should he agree to accept the invitation. Request Department guidance on how to respond to the letter.

COBB